

reliable Kenya record seems to be an August bird collected by Jackson at Mumias at the turn of the century (Jackson 1938, who, incidentally, gives the distribution incorrectly as "eastern" Kenya, although only citing the western Kenya locality of Mumias; "eastern" is clearly a misprint). It is, however, possible that this very limited piece of undisturbed habitat in an otherwise heavily cultivated area provides a regular wintering site in western Kenya for these southern African breeding birds.

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The existence of a form of cliff swallow *Hirundo* sp. in Ethiopia

Whilst leading a birdwatching tour to Ethiopia in November 1988 we came across a small party of unfamiliar hirundines which were clearly a type of cliff swallow. They were observed well each morning of our stay at Kereyou Lodge in the Awash National Park (8°58N, 39°54E). A second party of English birdwatchers followed our visit, and they not only saw some of the birds we had seen in Awash, but also discovered a larger flock feeding around the cliffs by Lake Langano (7°35N, 38°45E) in the Rift Valley, some 180 km south-west of Awash.

The birds were first noticed by SCM while examining a mixed flock of feeding hirundines (chiefly Eurasian Swallows *Hirundo rustica*, but with several Striped Swallow *H. abyssinica*, Red-rumped Swallows *H. daurica*, and House Martins *Delichon urbica*) through a telescope over the edges of grassland near the impressive gorge, a little to the west of the lodge. At least six birds were watched for considerable periods through mounted telescopes at ranges of about 500 m to 1 km in clear early morning light on 11 and 12 November; one of the swallows also briefly came within 50 m of C-G. Cederlund, J. Stigh and P. Gadd in the early afternoon of 11th at Kereyou Lodge verandah (which overlooks the gorge); later the same afternoon we also found two birds flying over grassland some 3 km away from the original site. We left Awash on 12 November, but when a second party of English birdwatchers (including G. Edwards and I. Lewis, who have supplied their notes) arrived on 3 December, they found three birds in the same area, having previously located a flock of some 20–24 birds by the cliffs at the western shore of Lake Langano on 30 November.

Description

(From notes made by the authors, with amendments as credited; differences noted may have been due to individual plumage wear or to varying viewing conditions.)

SHAPE AND FLIGHT ACTION

Small to medium, stocky swallows with tail only shallowly forked. The tail had a small central notch, appearing almost square-ended when closed but showing a distinct, shallow fork when partially spread (i.e. when the bird was executing turns in flight). Wing shape

and flight action similar to those of the African Rock Martin *Hirundo fuligula*. Flight action relatively fluttering, with frequent turns and periods of gliding in between bouts of fluttering. Kept to the lower elements of a large flock of mixed swallows feeding over grassland and the edge of a gorge. The Langanu birds fed around the cliffs in the early morning, moving up and down the cliff face, swirling about catching flying insects, and even alighting for brief periods (G. Edwards).

PLUMAGE

Crown, sides of head and neck blackish; no rufous visible, although looked for during the one very close view. Throat dark at the sides of neck with pale centre (although seemed quite dark at long range), GE noted throat, chin and upper breast very pale and clean of any markings, with a weak smudging of greyish-buff at sides of breast, not forming a complete or even a strong partial, breast band. Breast, belly and flanks whitish (greyish-white, somewhat darkening towards throat—C-G. Cederlund), with buffish or pale rufous wash, (darkening on undertail coverts—CE). Underwing coverts similarly whitish washed with pale rufous or buff, contrasting with dark undersides to primaries and secondaries (pattern similar to *H. rustica*'s). Whole upperparts blackish including crown and nape, with bluish gloss at least on wing coverts and mantle (seemingly also extending to crown—CE). Strongly contrasting uniformly pale rufous rump (pale buff to pale pink depending on light—CE); uncertain whether rufous extended to upper tail coverts or not. Tail all dark above and below, with no sign of any pale mirror spots although tails were seen well from above and below, fanned and closed.

Discussion

The birds were clearly cliff swallows, i.e. belonging to the *Hirundo spilodera* superspecies of Hall & Moreau (1970): their rufous rumps, shallowly-forked tails and overall rather stocky appearance and fluttering flight action reminded several of us of the American Cliff Swallow *H. pyrrhonota*. However, no form of cliff swallow has ever been reported from Ethiopia (Urban & Brown 1971, J.S. Ash, pers. comm.). Comparing our birds with the four species (or perhaps subspecies) recognized in Africa (Hall & Moreau 1970, Fry & Smith 1985), the lack of tail spots is a feature shown only by the South African Cliff Swallow *H. spilodera* and the newly described Red Sea Cliff Swallow *H. perdita*. In any case, the two West African species, *H. preussi* and *H. rufigula*, are both distinctly smaller as well as differing in other features.

Comparison with Red Sea Cliff *Hirundo perdita*

On range probability we at first suspected that we had discovered *H. perdita*, but comparing the Ethiopian birds with the type description and photographs there were major differences. *H. perdita* is described as having the rump "dark-grey with white bases and white fringes; most of the feathers have the white fringe (1–2 mm wide near rachis) abraded away" (Fry & Smith 1985). The rump was clearly pinkish-buff or rufous in our Ethiopian birds. The type specimen of *H. perdita* (from Sudan) had an all black throat with a pale chin spot; although at long ranges the throats of the Ethiopian birds often appeared dark, closer views showed this not to be the case; the throat centre was pale to the chin, and there was an ill-defined dusky-buff partial breast band. A re-examination of the photographs taken of the type specimen of *H. perdita* (supplied by D. A. Smith) actually shows a suggestion of brown or warm buff-brown fringing to dark feathers of the upper rump which does not show well in the reproduction of the colour slide included in the description of the type (Fry & Smith 1985). It is possible, perhaps, that the rump might

have more extensive brownish or brownish-buff feather fringes in fresh plumage (although unlikely to be pale rufous or pink). No plausible explanation could account for the difference in throat colour, however.

It has been speculated that *H. perdita* might well be found breeding in the Sudan or Ethiopia (Fry & Smith 1985). However, Smith (pers. comm.) informs us that during a considerable migration of Eurasian Swallows (500 h^{-1}) at Sanganeb ($19^{\circ}43'30\text{N}$, $37^{\circ}26\text{E}$) in early May 1983 he had noticed two strange pale-rumped swallows heading out over the Red Sea in the direction of Jeddah just prior to his discovery of the dead type specimen of *H. perdita*. He speculates that it is also possible that the species might be found breeding in hills fringing the Red Sea coast of western Saudi Arabia to the north of Jeddah.

Comparison with the South African Cliff Swallow *H. spilodera*

Turning to *H. spilodera*, which has been found spending the austral winter as far north as western Zaïre, we find that the Ethiopian birds most closely resembled this species. *H. spilodera* is known to vary according to age and feather wear, but the apparent lack of rufous on the forehead and lores and deep (possibly glossy) black head and neck do not comply with typical *spilodera*. In addition, *spilodera* invariably shows some white markings on the mantle which were lacking in the Ethiopian birds. Examination of skins at the British Museum at Tring showed considerable plumage variation on the underparts. Most birds had a pale buffy throat, with a variable amount of black spotting, and a rufous breast. A very prominent feature was the black markings on the breast, in others it was limited to a few black smudges or blobs, but all the specimens examined showed some black breast spots. The rest of the underparts were buffy-white and the undertail coverts rufous. This underpart pattern is distinct from the Ethiopian birds.

It would indeed be surprising to find small 'flocks' as far north as central Ethiopia (some 2600 km north-east of their previously known limit). South African Cliff Swallows breed between September and March (Maclean 1985), therefore small parties so very far from their normal range within the breeding season seems extraordinary.

We can only suggest that the Ethiopian birds represent an undescribed taxon which is closely related to *H. spilodera*, and perhaps conspecific with it. It may also provide the 'link' between *H. spilodera* and *H. perdita*. A parallel situation exists in the case of the assemblage of three long-clawed larks *Mirafra ruddi*, *archeri* and *sidamoensis* where two occur in very restricted ranges in Somalia and Ethiopia while the third is found in South Africa (Ash & Olson 1985). In addition, a few species of mainly southern African distribution, such as the Wattle Crane *Grus carunculatus* and the White-winged Pygmy Crake *Sarothrura ayresii*, have discrete, relict populations in the highlands of Ethiopia (Urban & Brown 1971).

Conclusions

Small parties of cliff swallows of unknown identity were discovered at two different sites in central Ethiopia in November and December 1988, comprising some 30–35 individuals. It is speculated that although most similar to the South African Cliff Swallow *H. spilodera*, they differ in having a very pale unmarked throat and breast, with a weak, darker smudge at the sides of the breast, blacker crown and nape and appear to lack rufous on the head or pale markings on the mantle. They differ from the type description of the Red Sea Cliff Swallow *H. perdita* in having a rufous or pinkish-buff rump, not mottled dark grey and whitish, and pale (not black) throat. It is suggested that they might well be of an undescribed taxon closely related to *H. spilodera* and perhaps providing a link between that species and *H. perdita*. It is also suggested that *H. perdita* could be found

breeding in western Saudi Arabia rather than in the Sudan or Ethiopia.

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Notes on two ravens *Corvus* spp. in Kenya

Sympatry

The Fan-tailed Raven *Corvus rhipidurus* and the White-necked Raven *C. albicollis* are members of a superspecies which replace each other in the northern and southern tropics of Africa respectively (Hall & Moreau 1970). With the exception of a vagrant White-necked Raven in extreme south-eastern Sudan (Nikolaus 1987), their ranges meet and overlap only in the far east of Uganda and along the northern and eastern margins of the Kenya highlands (Britton 1980, Lewis & Pomeroy 1989). These two ravens are mainly allopatric, however, and the literature contains but a single record of their occurring together, at an altitude of 2600 m around the summit of Mt Nyiru (2°08'N, 36°51'E) (Britton 1980).

The coexistence of these two ravens on Nyiru is due to the fact that it is one of a series of similar peaks (the Ndoto and Mathews Mts, and also the Maralal massif) which bring ecosystems typical of Kenya's highlands deep into the country's northern deserts. The White-necked Raven is at the northernmost extremity of its Kenyan range around Nyiru's upper slopes, while the lower slopes of the mountain are far into the northern lowlands so favoured by the Fan-tailed, whose typical altitudinal range is 400–1500 m (Britton 1980). This juxtaposition of two similar, cliff-loving and aerial species on a relatively inextensive highland makes their occurrence in mixed flocks likely.